

Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability

**ACCOUNTABILITY
ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS
SCHOOL CHOICE
SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
PARAPROFESSIONALS REGULATIONS**

Frequently Asked Questions



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ACCOUNTABILITY AND AYP

Q 1. What is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

ANSWER: New Jersey defines **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** as the measure of districts' and schools' progress toward meeting the goal of 100 percent proficiency in language arts literacy and mathematics by the year 2014. Each year, schools and districts have to assure that a certain proportion or percentage of all students within a school and within student subgroups meet state achievement benchmarks.

Q 2. What does the term "in need of improvement" mean?

ANSWER: Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, every state must set goals for adequate yearly progress (AYP) that each school must meet. Public schools in all states that do not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same content area are identified as in need of improvement.

Q 3. Does accountability apply to all schools?

ANSWER: All public schools, including those without test grades, are to be counted into the state's accountability system. These schools without test grades are counted as one unit with their respective receiving schools. This ensures closer vertical alignment of instructional services.

Q 4. Do all schools need to make AYP or just schools receiving federal Title I funds?

ANSWER: AYP applies to all schools, including charter schools. However, the sanctions of school choice and supplemental services for not meeting AYP requirements apply only to schools that receive Title I funds.

Q 5. How does New Jersey determine AYP?

ANSWER: New Jersey's accountability system for determining whether each student subgroup, school and district makes AYP is determined based on a series of decision points. These decision points are as follows:

- Each subgroup is reviewed to assure a minimum of 95 percent of the total group took the test;
- After the results of the test are received, the score of each subgroup is reviewed against the established AYP starting point and standard for language arts literacy and mathematics; and
- The scores of each subgroup are reviewed using the safe harbor provisions.

For those subgroups not making the benchmark objectives, a review of progress will determine whether they made safe harbor which is a reduction in failure rate by 10 percent over the previous year.

Q 6. What are New Jersey's benchmarks for calculating AYP this year?

ANSWER: These starting point percentages are:

	Language Arts Literacy	Mathematics
Grade 4	68%	53%
Grade 8	58%	39%
Grade 11	73%	55%

Q 7. Does New Jersey's single accountability system include all groups of students?

ANSWER: Formerly, limited English proficient (LEP) students and special education students could be exempted from taking state tests and meeting state standards. Under NCLB there are no exempted students.

Q 8. What student subgroups are included in the accountability system?

ANSWER: The subgroups include economically disadvantaged students, all racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and limited English proficient students.

Q 9. If a student subgroup does not make AYP, is the whole school designated as in need of improvement?

ANSWER: Yes. Schools must meet benchmarks for all students and also for each subgroup of students. However subgroups can meet safe harbor, by reducing the proportion of students in a group not meeting benchmarks from one year to the next.

Q 10. How will adequate yearly progress (AYP) be calculated if there is a small subgroup of students?

ANSWER: If there are 20 or fewer students in a subgroup, the data are not included in the calculation of the school's AYP, since the number of students is deemed too small to make statistical judgments.

Q 11. How will special education students and limited English proficient (LEP) students figure into the calculation of AYP?

ANSWER: Often special education and LEP students are placed in schools outside of their community school for services. Whether placed out of district or within the district in another school, special education and LEP students will be included in and counted in their home school.

Q 12. Are recent enrollments counted in the accountability system?

ANSWER: No. Any student enrolling in a school or district for the first time after July 1, up to the test administration date will not have been enrolled for a full academic year. For making decisions

related to AYP, New Jersey will not include in the accountability tally the results of any student enrolled less than one full academic year in a school for school accountability, or in a district for district accountability. Nevertheless, students who transfer from one school to another within a district are still counted at the district level.

Q 13. What if a school does not improve?

ANSWER: States and local school districts will aid schools that receive Title I funds in making meaningful changes that will improve their performance. In the meantime, districts will offer parents options for children in low-performing schools, including the choice to transfer to another higher performing school or to receive extra instructional help for students from low-income families (see section on [Choice and Supplemental Educational Services](#)).

In addition, the law requires states to identify for improvement those school districts that do not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years or longer and to institute corrective actions

SCHOOL CHOICE

Q 1. How will schools with a single school at a grade meet intra-district school choice?

ANSWER: School districts should remind parents that New Jersey is a choice state. There are charter schools and inter-district choice schools that offer other choice opportunities. In addition, districts can initiate other strategies to expand school choice, e.g., develop agreements with surrounding districts.

Q 2. How do parents know about choice options?

ANSWER: Districts are required to inform parents of school status and choice opportunities available to them. Additionally, schools should also inform parents regarding plans to improve school performance.

Q 3. What students are eligible for school choice?

All students in schools identified for improvement are eligible for transfer. When there are insufficient spaces to accommodate all requests, a priority list should be developed giving preference to the lowest-achieving students from low-income families.

Q 4. When will parents find out about school choice?

ANSWER: Under *No Child Left Behind*, school districts are required to notify parents if the school has been identified as needing improvement prior to school opening, no later than the first day of the new school year.

Q 5. What action can parents take if their school or district does not offer school choice to their child?

ANSWER: Schools and districts receiving Title I funds must provide choice for eligible students as described above, unless there are no schools within the district to which they can transfer. If there are no choice options, supplemental educational services must be offered in lieu of choice only for those students that meet the eligibility criteria to receive supplemental services.

Q 6. Do public school options include only schools in the same district?

ANSWER: There may be situations where students in Title I schools have school options outside their own districts. For instance, a school district may enter into a cooperative agreement with another district that would allow their students to transfer into the other district's schools. Also charter schools and inter-district choice schools are other options.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Q 1. What are supplemental educational services?

ANSWER: Supplemental educational services are additional academic instruction provided outside of the regular school day, after school, during summer, etc. They may be offered through public- or private-sector providers that are approved by the state. Private-sector providers may be either nonprofit or for-profit entities.

Q 2. Which students are eligible to receive supplemental educational services?

ANSWER: There are two criteria for students to be eligible to receive supplemental educational services. First, only students enrolled in Title I-funded schools that have been designated as "in need of improvement" for two or more consecutive years are eligible for supplemental educational services. Second, eligible students must come from families that meet the federal poverty guidelines. Students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch generally meet this poverty standard. Services are then prioritized to target the lowest-achieving eligible students.

Q 3. What happens if the available funds are not sufficient to provide services to all eligible students?

ANSWER: If the funds available are insufficient to provide supplemental educational services to each eligible student whose parent requests those services, the school district must set a priority for serving children who are the lowest-achieving first. The school district must use objective criteria to determine the lowest-achieving students.

Q 4. Which Title I schools must offer these supplemental educational services?

ANSWER: Schools in their second consecutive year of school improvement status must provide the services.

Q 5. What is the district's responsibility under supplemental educational services?

ANSWER: Districts must arrange for the provision of supplemental educational services to eligible children from a provider on the state-approved list. The provider is to be selected by the parents of the eligible child in consultation with the school district.

Q 6. May the service providers or school districts disclose the names of eligible students?

ANSWER: The identity of any student who is eligible for or receiving supplemental educational services may not be disclosed without the written consent of the student's parent(s).

Q 7. Who is responsible for gathering data to determine effectiveness as an approved provider?

ANSWER: The NJDOE is responsible for gathering effectiveness information on an annual or periodic basis.

Q 8. What is the deadline by which the parents must request services?

ANSWER: In establishing a deadline, the district must ensure that the parents have sufficient time and information to make informed decisions about supplemental educational services. Services must be available at the opening of the school year.

Q 9. Can a public school or a school district become a supplemental educational service provider?

ANSWER: Yes. For a school district, public school, or charter school to be an eligible provider, it must go through the same approval process as all other potential providers. However, school districts, public schools and charter schools identified as in need of improvement may not provide supplemental educational services.

Q 10. What are the funding requirements?

ANSWER: School districts are required to reserve 20 percent of the district's total Title I allocation for school choice and supplemental services.

Q 11. What are the criteria the state uses to approve providers?

ANSWER: Applicant agencies are required to complete an application that describes how the educational program they use has shown effectiveness in increasing students' academic achievement and how it is consistent with the school's education programs and the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). They also have to assure they will meet other state requirements.

Q 12. What is the state's responsibility for supplemental educational services?

ANSWER: The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is responsible for developing a list of approved providers, as well as monitoring the quality and effectiveness of their services. The NJDOE must also annually distribute application information to other potential providers about the application process to become an approved provider.

Q 13. How will providers be paid?

ANSWER: The school district will pay for the supplemental educational services directly to the providers. However, all approved providers must have a contract with the district before services are provided and fees paid.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

Q 1. Who is a paraprofessional?

ANSWER: A paraprofessional is an instructional staff person who does not hold the position of teacher, but assists in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher. Sometimes paraprofessionals are called teacher aides or instructional aides.

Q 2. Are “instructional aides” also considered to be paraprofessionals?

ANSWER: Yes. These two terms are used interchangeably; therefore, those requirements that apply to “paraprofessionals” also apply to staff members called “teacher/instructional aides.”

Q 3. What are the requirements for paraprofessionals under the legislation?

ANSWER: New criteria for the qualifications have been established for paraprofessionals who work in Title I schools and programs. They include the following:

- Two years of college or 48 college credits;
- An associate’s degree; or
- Passing a rigorous assessment that shows the ability to assist with the instruction of language arts literacy and mathematics.

Q 4. What are the other requirements?

ANSWER: All paraprofessionals in schools supported by Title I funds must have a secondary high school diploma or its equivalent and provide instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Q 5. Do the new requirements apply to all paraprofessionals in Title I schools and programs?

ANSWER: No. Only those who are paid in whole or part with Title I funds. Regardless of their assignment, all paraprofessionals in schools designated as schoolwide projects must meet the new requirement.

Q 6. For currently employed paraprofessionals in schools with Title I funding, are the requirements the same?

ANSWER: For paraprofessionals hired prior to January 8, 2002, the same criteria must be met as above. However, these paraprofessionals have been allowed four years from the date of enactment, or until January 8, 2006, to meet the requirements.

Q 7. Are there any exceptions to the employment criteria for paraprofessionals?

ANSWER: Yes. The requirements apply only to those who have instructional responsibilities. Paraprofessionals involved solely with translation, personal care services, library/clerical assistance and those only conducting parental involvement activities are exempted from the requirements.

Q 8. What is an associate's degree?

ANSWER: Community colleges issue a credential called an associate's degree. It is based on sixty college credits.

Q 9. What other options are available?

ANSWER: Currently, various options are offered through community colleges, as well as many four-year institutions. Additionally, distance learning programs offer a non traditional route to obtain an associate's degree, earn 48 college credits or meet the requirement of a rigorous, formal assessment. These include local institutions, such as Thomas Edison College; web-based institutions, such as Western Governor's University; and other online vendors. There are also "rigorous" assessment options available through major test companies. Additionally, a framework for local "portfolio/performance" assessments is available.

Q 10. What is meant by a rigorous assessment for paraprofessionals?

ANSWER: In response to the law, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) announced they have developed the Parapro assessment to meet the intent and requirements of the law. For more information about the Parapro assessment you can access the ETS Web site at:
http://www.ets.org/search97cgi/s97_cgi.

Other groups are also developing assessments to meet this purpose. Professional associations in New Jersey, in partnership with the department, have developed a portfolio-based assessment that is designed to meet this requirement.

Q 11. Will additional funding be available to assist paraprofessionals in meeting the requirements for employment?

ANSWER: Both Title I and Title II funds can be used to support training designed to help paraprofessionals meet these requirements.

Q 12. What happens if a paraprofessional is unable to meet the employment criteria after four years?

ANSWER: Although the law does not specifically state the consequences for failing to meet the criteria, it is clear that an unqualified paraprofessional would be unable to serve in either a Title I targeted assistance program or in a Title I "schoolwide" program as a paraprofessional.